HALUZAH

I.

• • •

And God said let there be light, and then created from the darkness all that we can see, and touch, and feel.

Then God created Adam, and for him He created Lilith, but she was wicked and quarreled with Adam, until one day she bit of the forbidden fruit.

God grew wrathful and cast Lilith into the forest at the edge of Paradise.

Then God took from the rib of Adam and breathed into it and made Eve.

And Adam and Eve lived in paradise without affliction, without pain, when the serpent at dusk and at dawn, at the border between light and darkness, came to the last tree at the edge of Paradise to speak and to roll with Lilith.

The serpent, the devil, Lucifer, once was the most beloved of God, the most beautiful, luminous, and wise among the angels, until he ate of the forbidden fruit.

And so he believed he could stand equal with God, but there was no more light for him and He cast him into the darkness with his companions.

So as not to become one with the darkness, the demons take the sap and the blood from the breath and the life given by God and feed upon it, and so did the Serpent make a pact with Lilith.

For she had become mortal when she bit of the forbidden fruit and time passed over her and aged her.

And the Serpent told her to open the gate of paradise and call him inside, and in return the serpent bit her and put venom in her and she lay without her senses.

So went the serpent and tempted Eve to bite of the forbidden fruit, and Eve went and tempted Adam, and having become mortal, the Lord cast them upon the earth.

And the devil returned to Lilith and squeezed of the fruit upon her mouth and she awoke and they departed into the darkness.

Then the Lord cast Adam and Eve upon the Earth and said unto them: go forth and multiply. And they and their descendants brought sacrifice unto the Lord.

II.

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The Lord saw that in their goodness the mortals of the earth were weak, and in the darkness Lucifer and Lilith remained alone, for their companions had been swallowed by the void.

And the Lord spoke with them at dusk and at dawn that they might carry to earth and place egg and seed among the mortals, so that through the generations there would be born the illumined man who would govern the earth.

And the Lord called Adam and Eve and said unto them:

> *From your blood shall come forth a weak lineage and from its weakness it shall perish. And I have spoken with those of the darkness that they may come to earth and mingle with you and your descendants. From the mingling shall come the man who can bear the weight of the earth.*
>
> *For this the women shall pay in the pain of childbirth and the men in toil unto death. Do you accept?*

They accepted and the earth filled with men and with giants and with nephilim, creatures that were neither man nor demon, and they lived upon the earth until it was full of fruit.

III.

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The men lived with the giants and the nephilim and multiplied and bore fruit, until the latter began to take the fruit of man and children too young.

And the men, to appease them, began to bring them sacrifice, and God grew wrathful.

Then Noah prayed for his family, for mankind, for protection from the giants and the nephilim, and the Lord appeared to him and told him to make the ark.

Noah followed the word of the Lord and brought aboard the ark his lineage and a pair of every animal the Lord showed him.

After the flood the Earth was cleansed of the darkness for a time.

IV.

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The men multiplied after the flood and forgot the darkness and the giants and began to build.

And they said among themselves: let us make a tower unto the heavens to reach the Lord.

The Lord said to Himself: man is mortal, he cannot dwell in the heavens.

And the Lord confounded their tongues and they scattered across the face of the earth, and the tower remained unfinished.

V. ABRAHAM

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From among the men scattered across the face of the earth, the Lord chose Abraham, for He saw in him a man able to hold in his hand all that he loves.

And God thought that if this man could renounce all and follow Him in all things, he could do His will among men.

He spoke to him and said: depart from your land and go where I shall show you.

And Abraham departed without asking.

The Lord gave him land and flock and promised him descendants innumerable as the stars. But Sarah, his wife, was barren and the years passed over them.

And Sarah said to Abraham: go in unto my handmaid Hagar and take from her the son I cannot give you.

Abraham went in unto Hagar and Ishmael was born. And with Ishmael were born the peoples of the desert.

But the Lord had not forgotten His promise and in their old age Sarah bore Isaac. And through Isaac passed the whole covenant.

And the Lord spoke with Abraham and said: go to the mountain and sacrifice your son unto me.

Abraham went without asking.

When he raised the knife, the Lord stayed his hand and said: now I know that you serve nothing but me.

And this was the first proof that from the mingled lineage there can come a man able to hold in his hand all that he loves and to let it go.

VI. SODOM AND GOMORRAH

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There came to the ears of the Lord the cries from Sodom and Gomorrah, for the men of that place had fallen into pleasure for the sake of pleasure and into evil for the sake of evil.

The Lord sent two angels to see.

When Abraham saw the angels going toward Sodom, he ran to the Lord and said: if there are fifty righteous in the city, will you destroy them with the wicked?

And the Lord said: if there are fifty, I will spare them.

And Abraham said: and if there are forty?

And the Lord said: if there are forty, I will spare them.

Abraham went down to ten and the Lord said: if there are ten, I will spare them.

There were not even ten.

Lot, nephew of Abraham, went out of the city with his own, and the Lord sent fire from heaven.

And the wife of Lot looked back and became a pillar of salt.

Sodom and Gomorrah burned and nothing remained.

This was the proof that man without giants, without nephilim, without darkness, can earn the fire on his own by choice.

VII. MOSES

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The lineage of Abraham multiplied in Egypt and became enslaved under Pharaoh.

When Pharaoh saw that the Hebrews multiplied, he was afraid and ordered that all the firstborn males be slain.

A mother placed her son in a basket upon the Nile and left him to the mercy of the water.

The daughter of Pharaoh found him and raised him as a prince in the palace and called him Moses.

Moses grew and saw an Egyptian striking a Hebrew and slew him and fled into the desert.

He tended flocks and looked at the ground. His hands knew what they had done. He spoke not of it. Not to the flock, not to himself.

One day he saw a bush that burned and was not consumed. He stopped. He put his hand to his eyes to see better. The bush burned. The bush was not consumed.

He heard the voice of the Lord: take off your sandals. The place where you stand is holy.

He took off his sandals and stood barefoot upon the stone and said nothing.

The Lord said: I have seen the suffering of my people in Egypt. Go to Pharaoh and deliver the people.

And Moses said, with his eyes upon the ground: I am not a man of words. Send another.

The voice did not answer him with arguments. It did not promise him that he would know how to speak or that Pharaoh would listen.

The Lord said: go.

And Moses rose and took his staff and went. With his stained hands. With his small voice. With all his fear at his back.

He went to Pharaoh and Pharaoh did not listen and the Lord struck Egypt with ten plagues until Pharaoh let them go.

And the people went out of Egypt and when Pharaoh's army reached them at the sea, the Lord parted the waters and they passed through, and the waters closed upon the army.

Forty years they walked through the desert. A people that had forgotten what it was before the chains did not know even how to be free, and freedom had to be learned step by step in the sand.

And Moses went up alone to Mount Sinai and emptied himself of all that was his and stood forty days and forty nights without food, in meditation.

When his mind was empty and his heart pure, God gave him the law:

1. I am the Lord your God — you shall have no other gods before me.

2. You shall not make for yourself an idol or any image and you shall not bow before them.

3. You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain.

4. Remember the day of rest and keep it holy.

5. Honor your father and your mother.

6. You shall not kill.

7. You shall not commit adultery.

8. You shall not steal.

9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet anything that is your neighbor’s.

VIII. DAVID

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From the lineage of Abraham came David, a small boy with a sling who tended sheep.

Goliath came, the last of the giants, and stood before the army and cried out: send me a man to fight me.

David went with his sling and a stone and struck down Goliath, and the last giant fell upon the earth.

Samuel anointed David and from that day the Spirit of the Lord was upon him and David knew in a way different from all others.

God anointed David king and gave him victories over his enemies, lands from the sea to the mountains and wives in abundance, for a man able to bear the weight of a kingdom can bear also the weight of many houses.

One day David saw from the rooftop Bathsheba, wife of Uriah, and desired her.

He stood watching. He knew whose name was on her lips in the morning. He knew where her husband was at that moment. Uriah fought in David’s wars, far away, with loyalty.

He knew and sent for her.

He called her and took her and sent word to the general: set Uriah in the forefront of the battle and withdraw from about him.

The general read the letter. Uriah knew nothing. He died with his face toward the enemy, faithful to the last to a king who had sold him.

The Lord was wrathful, for He had believed him to be a man of light.

David fell alone in his chamber and broke before God and asked no forgiveness and gave no excuse, but stood there in silence and in shame.

He did not say: I erred, but. He did not say: you know how men are. He stood in what he had done and let the weight fall upon him whole.

For he knew that there is no pure man upon the earth. All carry egg and seed from the darkness.

But the direction in which you turn after you fall — that matters.

God punished him, then walked with him onward.

And from this line came all that followed.

IX. SOLOMON

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From the sin of David and Bathsheba came Solomon into the world.

The Lord came to him in a dream and said: ask what you will and I shall give it to you.

Solomon asked for wisdom.

God gave him wisdom, and with it Solomon gained riches, power, women, all that a man could desire.

Solomon built the Temple of Jerusalem. When it was finished, the Glory of the Lord entered the temple and the priests could not stand upon their feet.

He had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, for the kings of the earth sent him their daughters to have peace with him.

Lucifer saw from the darkness that Solomon was the wisest and the mightiest man upon the earth and thought that if he could turn him, all who followed him would turn with him.

And he sent Lilith from the darkness to breathe her spirit into the beautiful women of the neighboring lands and filled them with charm and with fire and sent them to Solomon.

They came one by one, and each carried within her a measure of the spirit of Lilith, and Solomon took them all, for the fire in him was great and would not be sated.

And slowly, as water wears the stone, they turned him toward the idols.

Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, did not feel when he turned. Not a day, not a moment of rupture. The wisdom was still

there — the words, the laws, the book. All of it was true. But it was no longer his. He knew what the good was and went toward something else. That is something worse than folly.

And one morning he prayed at strange altars and had forgotten the face of the Lord.

Then the Lord was wrathful and said: for this I shall tear the kingdom from the hand of your son. And so He did.

And God was grieved for He had believed him to be a man of light.

X. MARY AND JOSEPH

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God saw that man was turning from the light and searched the earth for the purest woman born of the lineage of men.

And He found Mary, a young woman of a small village, brought to the Temple by her parents as a child and raised there as a virgin dedicated to God.

When she came of age to wed, the priests knew not what to do with her — they could not keep her in the Temple, yet she was so given to God that word of her spread through all the land.

And the high priest commanded that all the widowers of the land gather and bade them each bring a staff.

And Joseph set out, an aged carpenter of Nazareth, yet still in his strength, toward the temple.

In the night before the widowers came, God sent Gabriel to Mary and said to her: you shall carry in your womb the Son of God.

And Mary trembled and said: how can this be, for I have not known a man?

Gabriel said: the Holy Spirit shall come upon you. That which is born of you shall be Holy.

The next day the widowers came, one by one, and their staffs remained silent.

Night was falling. Of the crowd there remained but a few old men.

The priest looked and saw a man of stern bearing, with white hair, a weathered face, and gentle eyes, and called him forth with his staff.

Joseph rose with the staff in his hand, drove it into the ground, and said: holy priest, I am not fit for the young virgin. I came at the call of your holiness as the sacred books teach. My years and my condition offer her no future.

And then the staff blossomed and from it flew a White Owl and alighted upon the shoulder of the Virgin Mary.

Then there was light and the high priest said: you have not chosen, you have been chosen.

Joseph took Mary into his house and kept her safe and did not touch her.

And Mary accepted without asking further.

Joseph saw that she was with child and, being a just man, took thirty silver coins to give her and set out to leave her in peace, so as not to shame her.

Gabriel appeared to Joseph and said: how do you think the staff blossomed? From where did the owl fly?

Shaken, he returned and fell to his knees and began to pray to the Lord.

And so Joseph kept Mary in his house until the time came to depart for Bethlehem for the census.

XI. THE MAGI AND HEROD

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And they set out when Mary had but little time before the birth.

Three magi also set out from the east toward Herod, to tell him of the greatness of Christ, for they had seen that a king was being born.

Herod was troubled and called the priests and the scribes and asked them where it is written that He shall be born.

They opened the books and read from them ancient as the mold and told the magi that the way would be shown unto them.

Herod sat alone after the scribes departed. He counted his years. He counted his sons. He counted his armies. And he feared a child in swaddling more than any army.

He gave the magi provisions for the journey and ten silver coins each and set men to follow their tracks.

The White Owl led them near Bethlehem. And that night the star appeared.

And it led them to the child Jesus, who lay in the arms of the virgin, in a stable, among animals, for there was no room for them in the city.

They were filled with light and gave the child:

Gold — for a king.

Frankincense — for a god.

Myrrh — for one who shall die.

When they were about to return to Herod, the angel Gabriel comes and tells them that Herod betrays Christ.

The magi follow the White Owl and escape all who pursued them.

The angel Gabriel tells Joseph to take Mary with the child and depart from the land.

Herod sees that the magi have vanished and orders that the children up to two years of age among the Jews be slain.

Herod dies and Jesus returns with Mary and Joseph to Nazareth.

XII. THE LIFE

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Jesus grew in Nazareth, son of a carpenter, and no one knew who He was.

When He turned thirty, He came to John who baptized men in the Jordan and asked to be baptized.

And John said: I have need to be baptized by you, and you come to me?

And Jesus said: let it be so for now.

When He came up from the water, the heavens opened and the White Owl descended upon Him and the voice of the Lord thundered: this is my beloved Son.

And Jesus went into the desert and fasted and prayed and meditated forty days and forty nights, until nothing was left of Him.

Lucifer came.

He said: if you are the Son of God, make these stones into bread.

And Jesus said: man does not live by bread alone.

And Lucifer showed Him all the kingdoms of the earth and said: yours if you bow before me.

And Jesus said: be gone.

And Lucifer departed for a time.

Jesus returned and went to the Sea of Galilee.

And He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting their net into the water.

He said to them: come, follow me.

And they left the net and came.

Further on He saw James and John in the boat with their father Zebedee mending the nets.

And He called them.

They left the boat and their father and came.

So He gathered the twelve — from the shore, from the tax booth, from the field — men no one else would have chosen.

And He called each by name and sent them two by two and gave them power to heal and to cast out unclean spirits.

He healed the sick and fed the multitudes and turned water into wine at the wedding in Cana, for His mother asked it of Him.

And Jesus came to Bethany, to the house of Lazarus, and ate at his table and spoke and listened.

There was Mary the sister of Lazarus, who left all her chores and came and sat at His feet and did not rise again.

Martha her sister complained: tell her to help me.

And Jesus said: Martha, you are troubled by many things, but one thing alone is needful and Mary has chosen the good part.

Lazarus died and Jesus tarried four days, and when He came, Mary fell at His feet and wept.

Jesus also wept. The only time He wept.

And He raised Lazarus.

From that day Mary was never again parted from Him.

There was in the court of Herod a woman named Joanna, wife of Chuza, the king’s steward.

She lived in the palace and in wealth, and one day she heard of Jesus and came and was healed.

And she left the palace and the wealth and followed Him and served Him with her goods and asked nothing in return.

When Jesus passed by the tax booth, He saw Matthew counting money.

And He said to him: come, follow me.

Matthew rose and came.

He made Him a feast in his house and tax collectors and sinners came and the Pharisees were offended.

One day Jesus was eating at the table of a Pharisee and a woman of the city came into the house.

Everyone knew who she was. No one said a word.

She brought a flask of costly oil and fell at His feet weeping and poured the oil upon them and wiped them with her hair.

No one understood what was happening there. That this woman had lived on the road of Lilith — free, untamed, belonging to no one.

She had come alone. And she had fallen alone. Without being asked.

The Pharisee was offended in his heart: if He were a true prophet, He would know what manner of woman this is.

And He knew. That is why He let her be.

Jesus said: he who is forgiven much, loves much.

He said to her: your sins are forgiven. Go in peace.

And Mary Magdalene rose and never left again.

The first to break from Lilith. And the last to leave the cross.

And He went up the mountain and spoke:

> Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
>
> Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
>
> Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
>
> Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.
>
> Blessed are those persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The crowds listened, for He spoke as one having authority, not as the scribes.

He entered Jerusalem upon a donkey and the crowd laid palm branches upon the road and cried: hosanna.

And that same evening He entered the Temple and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and said: my Father's house shall be called a house of prayer, and you have made it a den of thieves.

The priests were afraid and began to seek how they might kill Him.

XIII. THE CRUCIFIXION

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On the last evening He gathered the twelve at the table.

He took the bread and broke it and gave it and said: this is my body.

Then He took the cup and said: this is my blood shed for many.

Then He said: one of you shall betray me.

And they looked at one another and knew not of whom He spoke.

And Peter said: I shall never leave you.

Then Jesus said: before the cock crows three times, you shall deny me.

Judas went out from the table into the night and went to the chief priests and said: what will you give me if I deliver Him to you?

They counted out thirty silver coins.

Judas took the coins and waited for the hour.

They went to the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus with the disciples, and He said: stay here and keep watch.

Then He went further alone and fell with His face to the ground and prayed: Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Yet not as I will, but as You will.

And He returned and found them sleeping.

A second time. A third time. They slept.

The Lord said: sleep. The hour has come.

When Judas entered the garden with soldiers and with torches.

He went to Jesus and kissed Him.

And they took Him.

Then the twelve fled. All of them.

They brought Jesus before the chief priests and Peter stood outside in the courtyard, by the fire.

Where a maidservant said: this one too was with Him.

And Peter said: I know Him not.

A second time. A third time. And the cock crowed.

Peter went out and wept bitterly.

When Judas saw that Jesus received the sentence, he cast the coins into the temple.

And he said: I have sold innocent blood.

And he hanged himself.

The priests gathered the coins from the floor and one said: it is not lawful to put them into the treasury, for they are the price of blood.

And another said: nor can we spend them for the living.

They agreed and bought with them a field for the burial of the nameless.

And that place was called the Field of Blood.

Jesus they brought before Pilate.

And Pilate said: I find no fault in this man.

But the crowds cried out: crucify Him.

And Pilate washed his hands.

The soldiers took Him and scourged Him.

And they put a red cloak upon Him and wove a crown of thorns and set it upon His head.

They struck Him and said: hail, king of the Jews.

And they spat upon Him.

They set the cross upon His shoulders and led Him up the hill.

And He fell.

They compelled a man from the crowd, Simon of Cyrene by name, to carry the cross behind Him.

And they crucified Him between two thieves.

One said: if you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.

And the other said: we receive what we have earned. This man has done nothing wrong.

And he said to Jesus: remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Jesus said: today you shall be with me in paradise.

Darkness fell over all the earth at noon and lasted three hours.

Jesus cried out with a loud voice: my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

And the earth shook and the stones split and the tombs were opened.

Then He said: it is finished.

And He gave up the spirit.

The crowds dispersed.

And the twelve were nowhere to be seen.

The women remained.

And there stood Mary His mother and Mary of Bethany and Joanna and Mary Magdalene before the cross and they wept and they prayed.

XIV. THE DESCENT

• • •

The veil of the altar was torn.

The veil of the temple hung torn in two from top to bottom. The rocks were split. The tombs stood open.

The holy women bought spices and counted the hours.

The apostles could not be seen, could not be heard, nothing was known of them.

Peter was somewhere alone and wept in shame.

Saturday morning the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate, for the teaching was known to the enemies when to the disciples the darkness had taken their wits.

And they said: that deceiver said that after three days He would rise. Give us a guard at the tomb.

Pilate said: you have a guard. Go.

They set the seal of Pilate upon the stone and stood guard.

• • •

Below, in the Earth, there was the darkness from before the creation of the world.

There dwelt the demons, all who had fallen from the beginning.

And there were the dead from Adam onward, waiting for something for which they had no name.

Abraham had been sensing it for centuries. Moses counted without knowing what he counted. David hummed in a whisper the psalm

he had written long ago: Lift up your heads, O you gates eternal, and let the King of glory come in.

• • •

Jesus descended toward the abyss and came to the Water of the Sabbath.

> The boatman saw Him and was filled with light and said: have you come, son of god, to see me?
>
> Jesus said: I wish to cross the Sabbath.
>
> The boatman said: well then. Do you offer gold?
>
> Jesus said: I offer glory.
>
> The boatman said: do you offer frankincense?
>
> Jesus said: I offer love.
>
> The boatman said: do you offer myrrh?
>
> Jesus said: I offer a place in the kingdom of heaven.
>
> The boatman said: will you offer silver?
>
> Jesus said: I offer forgiveness.
>
> The boatman said: son of the gods, with your greatness the boat overturns.

And Jesus placed in his palm gold and frankincense and myrrh.

The boatman went still.

Gold was owed by kings. Frankincense was owed by gods. Myrrh was owed by the dead.

And he had been a slave since the creation of the world and had never seen one who owed all three.

The boatman ferried Him across in silence.

When He reached the other shore, Christ said: He is risen!

The Father answered from the heavens: Truly He is risen!

The boatman returned with the boat to the other shore and behind him a bridge was made over the Sabbath.

He laid down the oar and ascended with the angels to the heavens.

• • •

Jesus knelt at the edge of the abyss and prayed and meditated.

On earth His heart was still and His body cold.

In the abyss His heart was warm and His mind cold.

And He did as He thought and He thought as He did.

The abyss was ancient. Older than the light. Older than any name.

Since the creation of the world it had fed upon the breath of God in man, little by little, from every mortal.

And now the Lord stood before it.

The warmth left His hands first. He felt it. He did not move.

He remained in prayer while the abyss pulled. The white of His eyes dimmed slowly. His voice grew smaller. Then only lips.

The stones of the city of the abyss laughed in a whisper. The demons watched without moving.

They had seen this — the Abyss had swallowed the first light that came to it and every one after. They were patient.

If He destroyed the abyss, the righteous within would perish, and the wicked and merciless who came would be left in the darkness from before the light.

And the Lord would not leave them in the wilderness.

He prayed. He meditated. He was drained.

The demon came.

He said: look upon them. Bow before me and I shall make you king over the righteous of the abysses.

He said nothing.

The demon said: you are drained here all the same. The abyss swallows you. Bow before me and come to my kingdom and take the throne!

He remained in silence and in draining and in prayer.

The demon waited. And the stone waited. And the abyss waited.

And the Lord rose and went into the city.

And they brought Him to the heart of hell to show Him as prey.

And then something happened that the abyss had not known to expect.

Light rose from the midst of the abyss and it was not light that burns slowly.

It was the King of heaven and the darkness was breaking.

It was light that made every nail, every stone tremble, and the demons said: Christ is Risen!

And He took the key and locked the demons within.

And the angels from the heavens said: Truly He is Risen!

And the key the Lord kept.

Christ gathered the righteous to show them the kingdom of Paradise, and they cried out: Christ is Risen!

And the wicked and the merciless cried out: Truly He is Risen!

• • •

A man opens the door and his dead father stands on the threshold. He knows him. They do not speak.

He makes the sign of the cross and says: in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Glory to the greatness of the Lord.

A gravedigger was walking down the road toward home. He recognized before him a man walking and looking at the houses. He had buried him three days before. It was that face in the grave and now he walked in the street.

He made the sign of the cross and said: in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Glory to the greatness of the Lord.

In another part of the city an old woman stood at her door. Down the street a little girl was playing. She had died young. She was her sister. She knew that walk, she knew that face.

And she made the sign of the cross and said: in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Glory to the greatness of the Lord.

Many saw in that night and in that day those whom they had buried.

Many told no one.

And many spoke and no one believed them.

XV. THE RESURRECTION

• • •

The guards stood at the tomb with torches and with the seal of Pilate upon the stone.

And the earth shook.

An angel descended from heaven and came to the stone and rolled it away and sat upon it. His face was as lightning and his garments white as snow.

The guards fell to the ground as dead men.

When they came to themselves, the tomb was empty.

They looked at one another. They looked at the stone rolled away. They looked at the seal of Pilate broken.

They had not slept. They had not moved. No one had come.

They went straight to the chief priests and told them everything.

The chief priests heard and took counsel and counted out much money and gave it to the guards and said: say that His disciples came by night and stole Him while you slept.

And the guards took the money and said what they were told.

• • •

At dawn on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb, alone, in the dark, with spices in her hand.

She saw the stone rolled away.

She left the spices on the ground and ran to Peter and John.

She returned with John. He arrived first and stopped at the entrance. Peter went straight in.

The linen wrappings on the ground. The cloth from His face rolled apart and set to one side.

They left and knew not what to think.

Magdalene remained alone at the tomb and wept.

She stooped to look inside and saw two angels in white sitting where the body had lain.

The angels said: woman, why do you weep?

She said: they have taken my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him.

She turned and saw someone standing there.

She thought Him the gardener.

He said: woman, why do you weep? Whom do you seek?

She said: if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him and I will take Him.

He said: *Mary.*

She stopped.

Not because she heard a name. Gardeners do not say your name like that. No one says your name like that. As though He had known you before you were, as though He had called you from something in which you had been lost. She stopped and the knowing came before the seeing. She turned and fell.

Magdalene ran and told the others. Mary of Bethany and Joanna came.

And Jesus met them on the road and said to them: be not afraid.

They marveled and wept and bowed down and marveled again.

And He said to them:

> *There shall come the man with the inner light that is seen in the night. I show him to you. When you see him, you shall know that he is a man of my kingdom.*
>
> *For he and his own must see to it that man tills the earth.*
>
> *And my chosen ones with the inner light lay seed for My Second Resurrection.*
>
> *And let them hear from Me, from the Father, and from the Holy Spirit.*
>
> *Creation awaits them.*

The women heard and understood the task the Lord had given them.

• • •

Thomas did not believe. Eight days later Jesus appeared again.

Jesus said: put your finger here. Put your hand into my side.

Thomas fell: my Lord and my God.

At the Sea of Galilee they fished all night and caught nothing.

In the morning someone called from the shore: cast the net to the right.

They cast it and could not draw it in for the multitude of fish.

John knew Him first: it is the Lord.

Peter threw himself into the water.

On the shore, fish and bread upon the fire.

XVI. THE ASCENSION

• • •

Forty days He appeared and ate with them and spoke of the Kingdom of God.

He called them all to the Mount of Olives.

He stood before them and looked upon them one by one.

And He said to the apostles:

> *The one who has been lost shall come. You shall not know him. He shall be far from you and against you. He shall threaten and slay those who love me. And him I shall choose. For what man has broken shall be made straight and knowledge and grace shall remain.*
>
> *For in the Kingdom of heaven, those to whom the Lord reveals Himself and who receive Him in their souls are welcome.*
>
> *And after them shall come others, for the ladies have gathered by the will of the King and He has blessed their house.*

They did not understand.

He raised His hands and blessed them.

And while He blessed them, He was lifted up.

Two angels in white appeared beside them and said: men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing into heaven? This same Jesus who has ascended shall return in the same manner.

They returned to Jerusalem.

And they cried out: Christ has Ascended!

And from heaven it thundered, it flashed, and then it sang: Truly He has Ascended!

XVII. ABEL

• • •

Saul of Tarsus, called also Paul, a Roman citizen and a Hebrew of the tribe of Benjamin.

He had been raised under Gamaliel, the greatest rabbi of his time, he knew the law better than any and kept the law more uprightly than any.

At the killing of Stephen — the first man slain for Christ — Saul stood and held the garments of those who cast stones and watched and approved.

And he went from house to house and dragged the Christians to prison.

He asked for letters from the chief priests and set out for Damascus to arrest them there also.

On the road, at midday, a light fell from heaven mightier than the sun and mightier than anything he had ever seen.

The Roman fell to the ground.

Those with him heard the voice, but saw no one.

And he heard:

> *Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?*

He said with his face to the ground: who are you, Lord?

> *I am Jesus whom you persecute. It is hard for you to kick against the goad.*

Saul said: Lord, what would you have me do?

> *And the Lord said: Rise and enter the city. For from this hour you are called Abel, as the first who died without fault.*

Then water flowed.

And they took him and carried him to the bed of suffering.

Three days he did not see. Three days he did not eat. Three days he did not walk.

And the White Owl came.

It took him by the nape and brought him to Mary.

She laid her hands upon his eyes.

And she said to him: you were born Saul.

And she restored his sight.

The Owl brought him to Joanna.

She laid her hands upon his throat.

And she said to him: the Romans called you Paul.

And she restored his voice and his hearing.

It brought him to the Magdalene.

Magdalene laid her hands upon his hands and upon his feet.

And she said to him: the Lord has named you Abel.

And she restored his hands and his feet.

Water flowed, rivers in the desert.

And Abel left all and departed for Damascus.

• • •

> On foot, through Asia, through Macedonia, through Greece, through Rome.

Five times lashed with thirty-nine stripes.

Three times beaten with rods.

Once stoned and left for dead upon the road.

Three times shipwrecked.

A night and a day in the open sea.

Imprisoned in Philippi. In Caesarea. In Rome.

And from every prison he prayed and meditated.

• • •

And before Nero took his head he said:

I have fought the good fight.

I have finished the race.

I have kept the faith.

All things are lawful unto me, but not all things are expedient.

I will not be mastered by anything.

And the Lord drew him from the sentence and left Paul in his place.

Paul was silent when he closed his eyes and ascended to the kingdom of the Lord.

And from his blood there flowed water, and upon the block where they cut his head there grew a branch with blossoms.

Abel remained pure as the white of mornings to do the work of the King.

To lead man to the fertile land on the shore of the sea without cold, without winter.

• • •

> He who has the light is seen in the night and by the smallest ray of a star.
>
> He who is without light even by the moon is one with the night.

Abel said to make the soldiers for the work just as the Lord had taught him.

And he left the book of the day, the book of the night, and the book of the earth so that the chosen of Christ might go forth to see, to know, and to understand.

For the Lord saw that the weak fall into sin and the wicked are sin itself, and in the kingdom of the Lord only the righteous are promised the morrow.

XIX.

• • •

And Abel did the work of the Lord according to the scriptures.

And those who labored with him are with pure soul and light heart.

For the light filled their souls and from their souls and their flesh were born the flocks of the Lord.

And some rams had the light also.

And the earth filled with men and the men filled it with noise.

Upon the noise darkness fell and from their weakness they began to perish.

And Abel saw and went to tell the Lord.

• • •

> The mute one sings from the balcony and those who hear say nothing.
>
> When the enemy enters the city to overturn His throne, he who sits upon the throne sends the cavalry upon the coffers to the ends of the earth to fatten the nothing.
>
> Gold becomes light as the snowflake in the wind and bread heavy as the millstones.
>
> Men have forgotten God yet still they bow and make themselves idols or carve themselves to worship.
>
> Justice lies in the satchel of him who buys it.
>
> Man forgets for what he received his hands from the Lord.
>
> The children grow not knowing what they are.

> The earth cries out in weariness and no one hears.

And if you see them knotting and gnawing one, all, or many, know, Abel, that the horsemen come.

• • •

> The white one with the bow shall arrow you if you flee toward the Lord.
>
> The red one with the sword to soak the earth with the blood of man.
>
> The black one with the scales to frighten the belly and the jaws behind the sons of man.
>
> The pale one who walks with hell at his back and takes from men without lot and without number.

And the man with the inner light takes the righteous and they go to battle, and the Lord gives them power and the sword grows ever sharper and the arrows ever keener.

And when the chosen go forth with the righteous into the light, I come and bless them, for of them the Earth has remained from Me unto the ages of ages.